

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TUNIS 03027 021427Z

ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EUR-08 IO-06 EB-04 OES-02
DLOS-02 SSO-00 NSCE-00 NSC-05 SP-02 L-01 TRSE-00
ACDA-10 PM-03 NEAE-00 INR-05 INRE-00 CIAE-00 /070 W
-----021444Z 094051 /46

O R 021350Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6614

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBSSY ROME

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

SECDEF WASHDC

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

EUCOM

USDOCOSOUTH

S E C R E T TUNIS 3027

LIMDIS

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PLOS PBOR LY IT TS

SUBJECT: TUNISIAN-LIBYAN CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE:
DRILLING BY U.S. FIRM

REF: STATE 98421, STATE 095427, TUNIS 2994, STATE 79051

1. ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER BRAHIM TURKI CALLED ME
BY PHONE 1300 HOURS LOCAL TIME APRIL 30 ON INSTRUCTIONS
OF PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA, JUST AFTER RETURNING TO
TUNIS FROM KSAR HELLAL WHERE HE HAD HANDCARRIED
AMBASSADOR HEDDA'S ACCOUNT OF A MEETING IN DEPARTMENT,
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 TUNIS 03027 021427Z

PRESUMABLY APRIL 29, REPORTING THAT READING AND
BATES HAD SIGNED A CONTRACT TO REPLACE
ENI/SAIPEM'S SCARABEO IV IN ILLEGAL DRILLING OPERATION
IN TUNISIAN WATERS. NOUIRA AND ALL CONCERNED MEMBERS
OF GOVERNMENT, TURKI SAID, WERE "THUNDERSTRUCK" OVER
NEWS. PRIME MINISTER REQUESTED HIM TO INFORM ME
THAT GOT SEES THIS AS "CATASTROPHIC DEVELOPMENT",

"INCREDIBLE TURN OF EVENTS," "EXTREMELY GRAVE NEW SITUATION". TURKI ASKED THAT I ACCEPT HIS ORAL DEMARCHE AS TOP-LEVEL, SERIOUS APPROACH AND "CONVEY TO USG OUR SHOCK AND ASTONISHMENT" OVER THIS DEVELOPMENT.

2. I SAID I HOPED IT HAD BEEN EXPLAINED TO HEDDA THAT DEPARTMENT HAD BEEN MAKING EVERY EFFORT POSSIBLE WITHIN US LEGAL LIMITATIONS TO DISCOURAGE READING AND BATES FROM PROCEEDING WITH AGREEMENT. IN REPLY TO HIS QUERY, I TOLD HIM I HAD KNOWN OF POSSIBILITY OF READING AND BATES CONTRACT AND HAD REQUESTED AUTHORITY TO NOTIFY GOT AS SOON AS DEPARTMENT HAD SUCCEEDED OR FAILED IN ITS EFFORTS TO DISSUADE THEM FROM DRILLING IN WATERS WE JUDGED PROBABLY TO BE TUNISIAN.

I WAS AWARE THAT DEPARTMENT PLANNED TO SEND LETTER OF WARNING TO READING AND BATES BUT HAD NOT RECEIVED WORD THIS HAD BEEN DONE (STATE 98421 ARRIVED A FEW HOURS LATER AND I HAVE BRIEFED TURKI AS INSTRUCTED AND GIVEN HIM COPY OF LETTER. I SAID I SHARED MY GOVERNMENT'S REGRET OVER THIS SITUATION BUT HOPED SOME FURTHER MOVES WILL BE POSSIBLE BEFORE ACTUAL DRILLING WAS INITIATED. I PROMISED TO REPORT GOT'S REACTION TO WASHINGTON AND TO REMAIN IN TOUCH WITH TURKI IF I HAD ANY DEVELOPMENTS TO REPORT.

3. COMMENT: PERHAPS AT NO TIME SINCE THE 1967 BASHING-UP OF THE TUNIS EMBASSY BY STUDENTS, HAVE STIFFER WORDS PASSED BETWEEN TUNISIAN AND AMERICAN
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 TUNIS 03027 021427Z

DIPLOMATS. SINCE IT IS PART OF MY DUTY TO INTERPRET TUNISIA TO MY GOVERNMENT, I CAN SAY DISPASSIONATELY THAT NO EVENT IN THE ALMOST UNTROUBLED POST-INDEPENDENCE HISTORY OF OUR RELATIONS WITH THIS LITTLE REPUBLIC WILL BE CONSIDERED MORE UNFRIENDLY THAN WILL THIS INCIDENT SHOULD READING AND BATES PROCEED. TUNISIA HAS SEEN ENI'S TRANSGRESSION AS THE MOST OFFENSIVE THING DONE TO IT BY ITALY SINCE THE PUNIC WARS (TURKI'S WORDS TO UNDER SECRETARY HABIB ON HIS RECENT VISIT). WE ARE AWARE OF HOW TRUSTINGLY GOT COUNTED UPON-AND RECEIVED -- USG'S SYMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING FOR ITS CASE IN THE CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE. RELYING ON OUR SYMPATHY
H
GOT HAS FELT FREE TO ADVERTISE PRIVATELY AND PUBLICLY THE JUSTICE OF ITS CAUSE. PUBLIC OPINION HAS BEEN ENLIGHTENED BY YARDS OF NEWSPAPER COLUMNS AND DOZENS OF SPEECHES BY CABINET MEMBERS, GOVERNORS AND PARTY OFFICIALS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. WHILE FOREIGN MINISORY CAN APPRECIATE USG'S LEGAL LIMITATIONS IN

THIS INCIDENT, PRESS, STUDENTS AND PUBLIC PROBABLY WILL NOT. MANY HERE WILL CONSIDER THE READING AND BATES ACTION AS A STAB IN THE BACK BY "THE AMERICANS". THEY WILL NOT UNDERSTAND THE NICETIES OF OUR SYSTEM WHICH LETS PRIVATE ENTERPRISE'S INTEREST PREVAIL OVER OUR NATIONAL INTEREST. OTHER ARAB STATES WHO HAVE BEEN EVANGELIZED -- AT OUR SUGGESTION-- IN TUNISIA'S CAUSE WILL ALSO FAIL TO UNDERSTAND (OR CYNICALLY THINK THE WORST OF US) UNLESS WE TAKE SOME POSITIVE STEPS TO MAKE PUBLIC (A) OUR EFFORTS WITHIN OUR LEGAL POSSIBILITIES TO DISCOURAGE READING AND BATES AND (B) OUR CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR SOME EFFECTIVE MEDIATION OF THE CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE.

4. LET US ADMIT ALSO TO OURSELVES THAT "WE" HAVE BEEN FLIMFLANNED BY THE ITALIANS, WHO ARE NOW OFF THE HOOK. IT IS "WE" WHO NOW FACE QADHAFI'S THREAT
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 TUNIS 03027 021427Z

OF NATIONALIZATION OF US INTERESTS IF READING AND BATES FAILS TO FULFILL ITS CONTRACT. IT IS "WE" WHO WILL BE ACCUSED OF SELLING OUR OUR TUNISIAN FRIENDS TO QADHAFI AND LETTING "OUR" UNQUESTIONED ECONOMIC STAKE IN LIBYA PREVAIL OVER OUR CLOSE TRADITIONAL FRIENDSHIP WITH LITTLE TUNISIA.

5. I DO NOT WISH TO SOUND OVERDRAMATIC (AND I HAVE SLEPT ON THE DRAFT OF THIS MESSAGE) BUT I THINK IT WORTHILE TO REMIND THE DEPARMENT OF THE PERSPECTIVE IN WHICH THIS DEVELOPMENT WILL BE SEEN HERE.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: IN ANTICIPATION OF BEING SUMMONED TO AN EARLY MEETING THIS WEEK WITH ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER (OR PROBABLY PRIME MINISTER) I WILL APPRECIATE MOST SOOTHING GUIDANCE ON US VIEWPOINT THAT DEPARTMENT CAN PROVIDE, PARTICULARLY REGARDING ANY POSSIBLE LEGAL, DIPLOMATIC OR PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATAGEMS WE MAY STILL HAVE UP OUR SLEEVE.
MULCAHY

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CONTINENTAL SHELF, DISPUTES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 02-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977TUNIS03027
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770153-0371
Format: TEL
From: TUNIS
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t197705102/aaaadkma.tel
Line Count: 159
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: fbd95087-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 77 STATE 98421, 77 STATE 95427, 77 TUNIS 2994, 77 STATE 79051
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2325181
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TUNISIAN-LIBYAN CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE: DRILLING BY U.S. FIRM
TAGS: PFOR, PLOS, PBOR, LY, IT, TS
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/fbd95087-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009